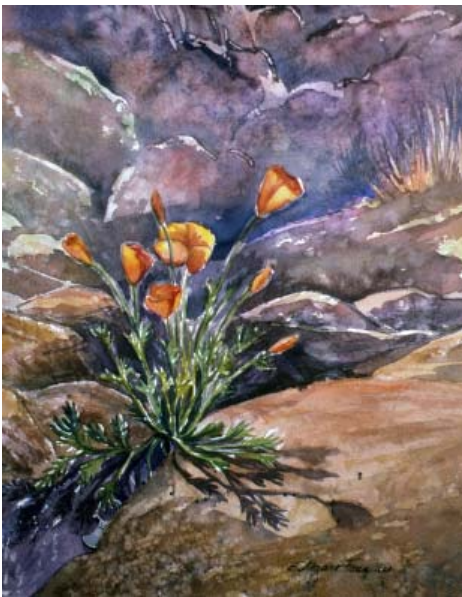


Composing with Value/Intensity Contrasts

Never underestimate the power of contrasts in value and color intensity. They have the power to focus attention on one part of our painting over another. Controlling them effectively can help you create stronger work.

How do you do that? Use neutrals (mixed from the group of colors you are using for the other parts of your painting in more "pure" forms). These neutral areas juxtaposed to areas of intense, pure color is what makes the pure color pop. Value changes do the same thing. Given dark areas and light areas in a painting, our eye goes to the light every time. Use that to your advantage!

In the sequence of paintings below, where is the focal area in each version?



Above: Pop Top and Poppies, watercolor by Ellen Fountain. In versions 2-4, the focus has been shifted using both value contrasts and color intensity contrasts. These are "extreme" examples, but they make the point. See enlarged original on next page.

Exercise:

Use the Wayne Thiebaud cake painting as your exercise. Where is the focal point in the original? Where are the "neutrals"? Do at least two versions of the cake painting, and move the focal point in each to a new location by changing value and/or color intensity.

Homework:

Use one of your existing paintings that has either a definite focal point or no focal point. If it has a definite focal point, change it by using value/neutral/color intensity contrasts. If it doesn't have a focal point, create one by using these same concepts.







Various Cakes, 1981, oil on canvas, 25 by 23 inches. Private collection.

Artist: Wayne Thiebaud